

Sixty-eighth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1532

Introduced by

Representatives Cory, Kasper, Kempenich, Lefor, Nathe, Porter, Strinden

Senators Beard, Burckhard, Hogue, Meyer, Wobbema

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact chapter 15.1-39 of the North Dakota Century Code,
2 relating to the establishment of an educational reimbursement program; to provide for a
3 legislative management study; to provide for a legislative management report; and to provide an
4 appropriation; ~~and to provide an effective date.~~

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

6 **SECTION 1.** Chapter 15.1-39 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as
7 follows:

8 **15.1-39-01. Definitions.**

9 For purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

- 10 1. "Parent" means a resident of this state who is a parent, conservator, legal guardian,
11 custodian, or other individual with legal authority to act on a program participant's
12 behalf.
- 13 2. "Program" means the educational reimbursement program created under this chapter.
- 14 3. "Program participant" means an eligible child participating in the program.
- 15 4. "Public school" means a public school in this state which serves students in any grade
16 from kindergarten through grade twelve.
- 17 5. "Qualified education expenses" means the costs for a program participant to enroll in
18 or attend a qualified school.
- 19 6. "Qualified school" means a nonpublic school in the state which accepts program
20 funds, not including a home school.

21 **15.1-39-02. Educational reimbursement program establishment.**

- 22 1. The superintendent of public instruction shall establish and administer an educational
23 reimbursement program to reimburse qualified schools for qualified education
24 expenses of program participants.

- 1 2. To participate in the program:
- 2 a. The parent of an eligible child shall request a program form for the school year
- 3 from a qualified school in which the eligible child is enrolled; and
- 4 b. Upon receiving the parent's program form, the qualified school shall:
- 5 (1) Certify to the superintendent of public instruction proof of the eligible child's
- 6 enrollment at the school; and
- 7 (2) Request program funds for the eligible child's qualified education expenses.
- 8 3. For each eligible school program form received, the superintendent of public
- 9 instruction shall pay to the qualified school in which the eligible program participant is
- 10 enrolled a sum equivalent to the qualified education expenses, but not more than thirty
- 11 percent of the per-student payment rate under subsection 3 of section 15.1-27-04.1.
- 12 4. A qualified school that receives funds under this chapter may use the funds only to
- 13 offset the cost of qualified education expenses the program participant or parent would
- 14 otherwise be obligated to pay.
- 15 5. If a program participant is enrolled in a qualified school for less than an entire school
- 16 year, the qualified school must return to the superintendent of public instruction the
- 17 funding provided under this chapter for that school year, reduced on a prorated basis,
- 18 to reflect the shorter enrollment period. The superintendent of public instruction shall
- 19 deposit with the public school district in which the program participant resides any
- 20 funds returned under this section.

21 **15.1-39-03. Program participant eligibility.**

22 A child is eligible for the program if the child is:

- 23 1. Eligible to attend public school; and
- 24 2. Enrolled in a qualified school for any grade from kindergarten through grade twelve.

25 **15.1-39-04. ~~State treasurer~~Superintendent of public instruction duties - Rules.**

26 In administering the program, the ~~state treasurer~~superintendent of public instruction:

- 27 1. Shall develop procedures and forms necessary to implement the program.
- 28 2. Shall use a standardized enrollment form to determine a qualified school's and child's
- 29 eligibility for the program and make the form readily available to the public.

1 **15.1-39-05. Program suspension.**

2 The ~~state treasurer~~superintendent of public instruction shall suspend a qualified school from
3 the program for failure to comply with applicable law or the program's requirements. The ~~state-~~
4 ~~treasurer~~superintendent of public instruction shall notify the school in writing that the school's
5 participation in the program is suspended. The notification must specify the grounds for the
6 suspension and state the school has ten business days to respond and take any corrective
7 action ordered by the ~~state treasurer~~superintendent of public instruction. Following the
8 expiration of the ten-day period, the ~~state treasurer~~superintendent of public instruction shall:

- 9 1. Declare the school ineligible for the program;
10 2. Order temporary reinstatement of the school's participation in the program,
11 conditioned on the performance of specified action by the school; or
12 3. Order full reinstatement of the school's participation in the program.

13 **15.1-39-06. Fraudulent use of funds - Referral to attorney general.**

14 If the ~~state treasurer~~superintendent of public instruction obtains evidence of fraudulent use
15 of program funds, the ~~treasurer~~superintendent shall refer the matter to the attorney general for
16 investigation and prosecution.

17 **15.1-39-07. Limitation on regulation of qualified schools.**

- 18 1. The program does not expand the regulatory authority of the superintendent of public
19 instruction, ~~state treasurer~~, a school district, or any other government agency to
20 impose additional regulations on a qualified school under the program beyond what is
21 necessary by the ~~treasurer~~superintendent of public instruction to enforce the
22 program's financial and administrative requirements. The ~~treasurer~~superintendent of
23 public instruction or a school district may not regulate a qualified school's educational
24 program under the program.
25 2. A qualified school may not be required to alter the school's creed, practices,
26 admissions policy, or curriculum to receive reimbursement for qualified education
27 expenses.
28 3. The superintendent of public instruction shall audit program funds disbursed to a
29 qualified school.

1 **15.1-39-08. Applicability - Report to the legislative management.**

2 Funds must be available to qualified schools starting with the 2024-25 school year. On or
3 before September 25, 2025, and annually each year thereafter, the superintendent of public
4 instruction shall report to the legislative management any educational reimbursement program
5 expenditures and supporting data.

6 **SECTION 2. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - FUNDING OF NONPUBLIC**
7 **SCHOOLS.**

- 8 1. During the 2023-24 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying the
9 funding of nonpublic schools. The study must include:
- 10 a. An evaluation of how other states fund nonpublic schools, including
 - 11 accountability and oversight methods;
 - 12 b. A comparison of funding based on need versus funding every student;
 - 13 c. An evaluation of the impact funding nonpublic schools would have on equity
 - 14 related to rural schools and students affected by federal education regulations;
 - 15 d. A review of the number of students denied admission by nonpublic schools; and
 - 16 e. An evaluation of the impact funding nonpublic schools would have on public
 - 17 schools situated within the same school district.
- 18 2. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together
19 with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-ninth
20 legislative assembly.

21 **SECTION 3. APPROPRIATION - DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION -**
22 **EDUCATIONAL REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM.** There is appropriated out of any moneys in
23 the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of \$24,000,000, or
24 so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the department of public instruction for the
25 purpose of establishing an educational reimbursement program, for the biennium beginning
26 July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2025.

27 ~~**SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This Act becomes effective on July 1, 2024.~~